Segue is published once a year in August. We accept submissions of high quality fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction between January 1 and April 30 (closed May through December), and writing about writing year-round via email. Before submitting, please read past issues to understand the sort of work we publish, then read our submission guidelines.

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Anecdote of the Sea

Take a child from the land, the country’s Center, put him beside the frothing sea.

A fretful sidestep moves his feet, detours Him along the tide, away from his miniature Fear beside the sea when empty shifting space Collides his feet with dampened undulations.

The sky becomes the ground. There and air Are languid liqueurs sticky on his hands and face.

Salt licks his tongue, implores acquired tastes He hasn’t found in lines lush and still on horizon blue.

Or white? Shaded grays between confuse The child’s thinking wheels. These mathematics Evolve too quickly for his wheels. He’s confused— What’s pulling the string behind these waves?

And these banks built beneath the wind, His feet wonder where to stand, if stand Is what this land allows. Such silly shadows come Off the sea. The boy is one, he sees, a negative stain

At the edge of what’s in front of him. His view Blends between sand, land, a bit of sea froth, too,

Like distance. Little shadows granulate in sand. To wander far enough is to mature, to be

Taller than the ocean’s line in front of him, The boy who doesn’t understand what’s rolling
Over in great stampedes out there, or under
The gluttonous glimmer of what’s going out

From here. The child learns which edges weaken under
Foot and orders his steps into methods of not falling in.
Weather Sick

I moved my desk, turned it to face north, the yard,
Alley and leave my back to the house. I did it last night
Before going to bed, and I was anxious to fall asleep

Like the thirteen year old I was was anxious to feel a woman,
So I could wake and come back to some new, shifted perspective
That might make the view bearable. I never had a desk

In my home north of here—just a bed, dresser and shelves
That didn’t hold books. I used to watch the windows—one
Looking west and the other north—for the storms approaching,

Lightning, snow and plane bleeps in the night sky. It must be
Cold by now, the weather up there, and more specifically,
The coffee in this pot. A train heaves in the distance, north

Of me looking north. A long horn sigh I first mistake for
The hundred odd box cars it must be pulling, is in the sky
Now, that noise, a plane pushing up, wheezing and circling

North as if to Kansas City or Denver and I want to be on it,
But the train blare is back, this time sounding east, pulling
Me down, heavy on the ground, this room’s hard tracks.

Light above the fence grows down the utility pole
As the sun rises and draws out of the dark wires, transformers,
The tree in my back yard I still don’t know the name of.

And the stones I set two years ago this month for a garden
That now sits fallow glow, push light into the grass still alive,
Uncovered by crinkled and twisting tawny leaves. I miss leaf burn,

Diesel and black soil stench turned under. I want an October carrying
Rot, first frost and sweater scratch on a walk in late afternoon when light
Fades and I can make out the breath in the dark air in front of my face.
Author Notes

Curtis Bauer has published and has poems and translations forthcoming in Barrow Street, The American Poetry Review, The Iowa Review, Circumference and Tar River Poetry. He has been a finalist for the New Letters Poetry Prize, The Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, and The Glimmer Train Poetry Open. He won the John Ciardi Poetry Prize for his first poetry collection, Fence Line, published by BkMk Press in 2004. He teaches Creative Writing and Translation at Texas Tech University and is the publisher of Q Ave Press Chapbooks.

About the Work

I have a little office at the back of my house in Lubbock: it has windows on both sides, one looking south, toward the main house, and the other looking north, toward the part of the country where I used to live. Depending on the season, and of course on my state of mind, I’ll move my desk for a change of perspective. The poem “Weather Sick” came about after one of those moves. It was fall, and I wanted to watch the trees in the yard; I hadn’t lived there long enough to realize that autumn wouldn’t be as dramatic as in the north; leaves don’t turn different shades, but die suddenly and fall down or blow away in the constant West Texas wind. The other poem, “Weather Sick,” is also about looking out, but in this particular case I was looking at a photograph of a child standing beside the ocean. One can see immediately that the kid wasn’t accustomed to the waves, to walking on the shore; there’s a certain fear and uncertainty in his gesture and posture, and he’s just a little speck in the photograph’s landscape. I spent a long while looking at that picture, wishing I were a little closer to the ocean, or at least some large body of water.

I might say that these two poems attempt to capture feelings of loss and anxiety, that they are methods in an attempt to explore how place possesses a transformative power over the observer. At the same time, music and play are important for me. I had been reading a bit of Wallace Stevens at the time of composition—I think that’s especially obvious in “Anecdote of the Sea.” I’m a fan of his craft and music and imagination, how he travelled so far without ever leaving his rooms, a bit like Proust, like Walser, and of course Pessoa (three other writers who are highly influential in my formation, whose voices are always conversing in my head). So in a sense, I want the poems to not only travel or possess an element of movement, but they should also provide music that captivates and carries the reader forward. I’d like to say that “Anecdote of the Sea” does this especially well. I see the pressured syntax and rhythms as jarring, sometimes rough, like waves in the tide moving in and out. That’s how I hear it anyway. “Weather Sick,” on the other hand is a poem that doesn’t have as much playful and conscious rhythm as it does jarring juxtapositions of time and space. The poem attempts to capture how we are constantly moving into and out of a remembered place by identifying its relationship to the space we inhabit. In a way, it’s a bit like collage, how putting diverse images beside each other can create a new image; concentrated reflection in the midst of looking at the mundane.

It’s challenging to bring these ideas out in language. When the syntax is slightly quirky, like it is in both of these poems, a poem runs a risk of confusing the reader, so there has to be more than text and music to hold together the structure of the poem; there must also be some thread the
reader can hold on to that will slow down the reading, force the reader to be more conscious of other tools at work. Part of my writing process involves reading lines and stanzas over and over, listening to how they sound by themselves, but also in the context of the whole, how they build a foundation. Hearing the poem helps me identify its strengths and weaknesses and this allows me to revise the poem accordingly.

**Curtis Bauer on the Web**

[thedigram.com/7_2/bauer.html](thedigram.com/7_2/bauer.html)


[www.cortlandreview.com/authors.php?search=B](www.cortlandreview.com/authors.php?search=B)

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